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SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR YOUR VISIT AND ATTENDANCE AT IDEX 2009

CLASSIFIED BY: AMBASSADOR RICHARD G. OLSON, REASON 1.4 (b,d)

11. (C) We look forward to your visit to the UAE and participation in the 9th International Defense Exhibition and Conference (IDEX).

Punching Above Its Weight

12. (C) Over the past five years the UAE has emerged as a regional powerhouse, using its financial clout and diplomatic activism to expand its influence from North Africa through the Levant to the Indian Sub-Continent, and indeed globally in financial circles. The bilateral relationship has been carefully nurtured from a strong mil-mil base emerging out of the first Gulf war into a much broader relationship in which the full range of USG Agencies work closely with Emirati counterparts. We consult extensively with the Emiratis and seek their advice, especially on tricky regional issues. Our trade relations have grown (they are our largest export market in the Middle East region) and although the UAE, and particularly Dubai, is feeling the pinch of the global financial crisis, we have not seen an immediate impact in the security field. Abu Dhabi's oil reserves generally suffice to keep defense programs on track, although some discretionary construction projects may be slowed down. In the broader economy, the frenzied pace of construction which we saw only six months ago has slowed considerably.

UAE and the Region

13. (S) The UAE has generally played a helpful role in a number of areas:

Iraq:

- First GCC Country to cancel Saddam era debt and to re-establish an embassy: other GCC nations followed;
- Supportive of Iraqi participation in the GCC+3;
- Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan (MbZ) came away from a meeting with PM Maliki more convinced he has Iraqi national interests at heart, and also convinced about the importance of the US security agreement with Iraq.

Afghanistan:

- UAE SOF has been quietly deployed as part of OEF since 2002, and has recently come out of the closet as part of ISAF (UAE is permitting press coverage emphasizing a humanitarian mission);
- UAE SOF plans to deploy aviation components to Afghanistan (4 x AH-64 Apache Longbows, 3 x UH-64L Blackhawks, 1 x Twin Otter, and 2 x CH-47F Chinooks);
- MbZ sees the Afghan deployment as a way of transforming and hardening his forces, but also recognizes the political imperative for moderate Arabs to publicly support the fight against Al-Qaida and the Taliban.

Pakistan:

- UAE has taken a leading role in the Friends of Pakistan initiative, and is signaling that it will contribute financial support, provided multilateral arrangements are put in place;
- The Al Nahyan family had a long-standing relationship with former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, and this has transitioned to support for her husband, Asif Ali Zardari.

Iran:

- For the Emiratis, Iran is a primordial obsession, and all security conversations soon turn to the Iranian threat (Iran is 46 seconds from the UAE, as measured by the flight of a ballistic missile);
- Abu Dhabi leadership believes the international community is seized with the nuclear issue, but insufficiently focused on Iran's efforts to destabilize the region or rebuild past "Persian" influence;
- Important to consult closely with the Emiratis as we develop new Iran policy.

----- Mil-Mil Relations -----

14. (S/NF) The UAE provides critical (not publicized) support for several military component commands in the CENTCOM AOR.

- Al-Dhafra air force base is the high altitude ISR hub for the AOR, and supports 50 percent of aerial refueling in the AOR.
- Dubai and Fujairah ports in the Northern Emirates are the logistics backbone for the U.S. Fifth Fleet and commercial trade. Jebel Ali is the major U.S. military liberty port. Fujairah port is a major trans-shipment hub to support Afghanistan military operations.
- Minhad Air Base is a critical hub for Coalition/ISAF partners in Afghanistan, including the Australians, Dutch, Canadians, Brits and Kiwis.

15. (C) Security Assistance is a cornerstone of our relationship.

- UAE is a cash customer and purchases a significant amount (but certainly not all) of its equipment and training from the US. FMS sales are in excess of \$11 billion and commercial sales are of a similar or greater amount. There are an additional \$11 billion of FMS cases in development, and a similar amount for DCS.
- The UAE recently purchased nine (9) Patriot batteries, and expects to move forward on the purchase of THAAD soon, with the aim of supporting the UAE's desire for an integrated air defense system. UAE will be the first country outside the US to purchase the THAAD system.
- The major FMS/DCS systems are: Hawk, F-16, Weapons (JDAM, Hellfire, Maverick, LGB, cluster, HARM, Harpoon), HIMARS, AH-64, UH-60 M/L, AOC operating system, Patriot, C-130, CH-47, Shared Early Warning, CENTRIXS, NVGs, land vehicles, and small arms.
- You should be aware of the following UAE LOAs in offer status: training for all major systems, COMSEC including Type I crypto, 3 x E-2C Hawkeye EDA, SL-AMRAAM components, and JAVELIN.
- The following systems have been requested and are in various stages of FMS and DCS development: 3 x THAAD, 24 x RQ8 Firescout, 4 x C-17 Globemaster, 12 x C-130J (option for 4 x KC-130J), satellites/imagery, 16 x CH-47F (4 via DCS), land based Phalanx, XM-982 Excalibur, XM-1156 PGK, 5000 X GBU-39 Small Diameter Bomb, E-2D Hawkeye, Boeing Wedgetail, AOC system upgrade, Link-16 integration on all appropriate platforms/ground facilities, stinger/avenger/VMSLP, MRAP, critical national infrastructure protection, and Head of State missile ASE.
- The UAE maintains an active exercise schedule with US and other multi-lateral partners. They participate in 10-12 US sponsored exercises annually which help assure interoperability and build capability.

16. (S/NF) Existing vulnerabilities in the following areas:

- Capability gap in UAE ability to counter a mine threat from the sea.
- Integrated consequence management. Government agencies react independently in the face of a crisis or mishap.
- Little perceived collection, processing or dissemination of actionable counter-proliferation intelligence (often reliant on US provided targeting information).

Challenges

¶17. (S/NF) One of the main challenges that the USG faces in the UAE is dealing with rapid growth, both Emirati and our own. It can be virtually impossible to get a hotel room in Abu Dhabi, housing our people in a overheated market is a real challenge, and our new (2004) state of the art Embassy is already too small for everyone who wants in. As we start the integrated air defense program (all FMS), and as we move from supplemental to regular budgetary funding, there will inevitably be pressure from DOD/CENTCOM (and other agencies) to put more people on the ground here. The UAE will need to fund the support for their increased military activity, but so far has been unwilling. They always assert that the 3.8% admin fee should be enough to cover specific case support.

¶18. (S) The recent crashes of 2 x UAE F-16 Block 60s are cause for concern. The first mishap occurred in January and the second occurred in February. Both aircraft were lost and the UAE pilots were killed. The initial impression of both mishaps is that they were caused by pilot error in basic skills. This should not be raised with UAE officials. We encourage you to thank the UAE for its participation in OEF and OIF. In particular its efforts in AFG and taking command of the Maritime Coalition (TF-152, a NAVCENT priority) in late Fall

¶109.

¶19. (S/NF) We have been at an impasse with the UAE on the DCA since 1994, and while we have developed a variety of risk-laden work-arounds for existing deployments, it is difficult to see any great expansion of combatant forces here absent some movement on this issue. The UAE asserts its sovereignty at every opportunity and direct negotiation on the DCA may prove to be more risky than the potential rewards.

¶10. (S/NF) Without directly addressing the DCA, the relationship could be improved if the UAE were to partner with the US more closely in a few areas. Moving the US Naval forces in Fujairah onto the UAE Naval Base would improve our force protection and lead to increased cooperation and security on the sea and the shore. Streamlined US military entry and exit with a MIL ID card at Al Dhafra would be welcomed. Increased access and pier space in Jebel Ali port are becoming critical issues as the Dubai Ports World (DPW) has decreased the amount of pier space for NAVCENT use. Increased use of the Abu Dhabi port may serve to ease the pressure at Jebel Ali and Fujairah. As the US reorganizes its MIL basing footprint in the region, there may be some willingness for the UAE to allow more passive US presence in their country.

¶11. (C) We look forward to seeing you at IDEX. I welcome any initiative to synchronize USG efforts. The Embassy team works closely with all commands with a stake in the UAE.

OLSON